

South Street Seaport Museum,  
203-204 Front Street  
(Hart-Carpenter-Havens Building)  
New York City  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5675

HABS  
NY,  
31-NEVO,  
132-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
NY  
31-NEVO  
132-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM  
203-204 FRONT STREET  
(Hart-Carpenter-Havens Building)

HABS No. NY-5675

Location: 203-204 Front Street,  
Between Fulton Street and Beekman Street,  
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: New York City. Lessee: South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Occupants: South Street Seaport Museum (203).  
and Volunteer Workshop (204).

Present Use: Model display gallery and offices (203).  
Boat Work Shop and offices (204).

Significance: Joined together as a hotel in 1882, 203 and 204 Front Street were originally built at different times; the former most probably in 1816 and the latter in 1798 or 1799. Recently, the South Street Seaport Museum restored the two buildings following the 1882 alteration elevation by architect Th. Engelhardt. The front elevation shows granite pier shopfronts and Neo-Grec styled incised cast-iron window lintels. The original Federal Style buildings were owned by grocers Peter G. Hart (203) and Philetus Havens (204). Today the buildings serve as a gallery and offices for the South Street Seaport Museum, a neighborhood of stores, galleries and piers standing in close proximity to high-rise office buildings in Lower Manhattan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 203 Front Street: "Between 1815 and 1816, the assessment for 196 (later 203) skyrocketed from \$5,000 to \$9,000, an increase which certainly means that a new building replaced the old, or the old was rebuilt, refurbished and enlarged. At \$9,000 it was almost double the value of old frame buildings standing nearby which hovered around \$4,000 to \$5,000 in assessed valuation." (Rosebrock, "Historic Structure Report", p.6). The new building was constructed for Peter G. Hart, grocer.

204 Front Street: In 1798 Thomas Carpenter & Co., a mercantile firm, joined Tredwell Jackson in 209 Water Street, and on January 12, 1799, Tredwell Jackson sold the land and building to Thomas Carpenter and Philetus Havens. That year their directory listing read "T. Carpenter & Co., 209 Water and Store 198 Front." In 1829, Front Street was renumbered and 198 became 204 Front Street.

2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: In 1750, Water lots #3 and #4 were granted to Samuel Fingley and Charity Montaine respectively. Once filled, the land was designated Block 96W, lots 10 and 9. Today the two lots are included in lot 5. Information for the following chain of title comes from New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

203 Front Street

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
1796 Liber 54, p. 195		Partition Deed Allotments as follows: John Moore...10, 18; Lewis Moore...11, 15, 16, 17
July 13, 1815 Liber 109; p.414	John W. Moore (Gentleman) and Mary Moore	Peter G. Hart (\$5,550.)
April 25, 1896 Liber 35; p.273	Mary Hart Alexander (formerly Bradish)	Herbert B. Turner, lot 10, 18
July 24, 1919 Liber 3100; p.5	Henry A. de Meli (Exr. and Trustee of Henry G.D.)	William A. Winant, lot 10, 18
July 22, 1963 Liber 6190; p.489	William A. Winant	203 Front Street
April 12, 1968 Liber 294; p.260	203 Front Street	Delegate Realty Corp.

204 Front Street

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
July 29, 1795 (Indenture made May 1, 1793) Liber 50; p.455.	Heirs of Frederick Fine	Treadwell Jackson, (L2,560)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantor</u>
October 5, 1797 Liber 52; p.172	William & Effe Nicoll (perhaps the Nicolls did not receive payment at the same time as the other Fine heirs.)	Treadwell Jackson (L 512)
January 12, 1799 Liber 56; p.93	Treadwell Jackson	Thomas Carpenter and Philetus Havens
April 27, 1803 Liber 63; p.523	Thomas & Edith Carpenter	Philetus Havens Lots 9, 19
February 19, 1872 Liber 743; p.33	Jonathan Havens	William H. Gleason
May 21, 1920 Liber 3158; p.247	William H. Gleason (Executor of)	John H. Michaels Lots 9, 19
December 22, 1941 Liber 4138; p.37	Trustee will of Jacob H. Michaels	204 Front Street Corp.
April 11, 1968 Liber 294; p.10	207 Water Street Realty Corp.	Delegate Realty Corp.
<u>203 and 204 Front Street,</u> <u>now known as Lot 5</u>		
July 7, 1969 Liber 145; p.941	Delegate Realty Corp.	Seaport Holdings, Inc. lot 5
June 20, 1973 Liber 282; p.705	Seaport Holdings, Inc.	New York City, lots 1, 5, 8
June 20, 1973 Liber 282; p.814	City of New York	South Street Seaport Museum lots 1, 5, 8, (lease)
June 27, 1973 Liber 283; p.63, 81	City of New York	Chase Manhattan Bank (not lotted: Air Rights)

4. Original plans and construction: Since there are no known views of 203 and 204 Front Street before the 1882 alteration, it can only be assumed that they were typical Federal style commercial buildings. Before 1882, 203 was four stories tall while 204 was five stories. According to the alteration application, 203 had a peaked roof while 204's roof type was unspecified. During a recent excavation of 203 Front Street's foundation, two brownstone quoin blocks were discovered. These blocks are valuable as documentary evidence of the original Federal style facade, built in 1816.

5. Alterations and additions: In 1822, Philetus Havens (203) and Peter G. Hart (204) were most probably forced to raise the level of their ground floors to meet the new higher grade of Front Street to lessen the likelihood of the tide incursion. (Minutes of the Common Council, 1784-1831, Vol. 12:12 November 1821; 29 April 1822).

The most major alteration occurred in 1832 when the two buildings, owned separately, were altered together by architect Th. Engelhardt and Carpenter to form a hotel with saloon and dining room probably called Wainwright's. The gable roof of 203 Front Street was raised and flattened. (Before alteration, 204 Front Street was five stories tall; Hoffman raised and lowered the floor beams to change 204 Front Street into a four story building in addition to connecting the two buildings by arched doorways on each floor.) The entire front wall was taken down and rebuilt to suit the alterations. Details, such as the cast-iron lintels, are incised with Neo-Grec ornament. A full set of plans and elevations by Engelhardt were filed with the Buildings Department. No longer a hotel, in 1896, the openings between the two buildings were filled and an elevator was installed in 204 Front Street to be occupied by a cordage business.

In 1919, Alteration #2763 filed with 207 Water Street called for removing one granite facade pier of 203 Front and replacing it with a cast-iron column.

In 1920, both 203 and 204 Front Street were occupied by fish markets. Architect Otto L. Spannhake added an acid tank to the fourth floor and a limebox and diluting sink to the third floor of 203 Front Street. In the same year Charles Kreyenborg, at a cost of \$3,000, drew up plans to add a one story rear extension covered by a skylight roof for 204 Front Street. The next year, Claude H. Valentine, architect/builder, connected 204 Front Street and 209 Water Street. (The building directly behind 204). At the same time he filled in the cellar and replaced the old wooden columns on the first floor with new cast-iron columns.

Between 1968 and 1974, the South Street Seaport Museum employed architect Charles E. Hughes and contractor George T. Maros to restore 203 and 204 Front Street to its original 1832 condition. Restoration work included a new one-ply rolled roof, nine new windows, plumbing, heating and ventilating, cleaning and repainting of the brick, etc. A granite pier, like the original one, replaced the cast-iron column at 203 Front Street facade. The interior of 203 Front Street was renovated to house ship model displays on the ground floor and Museum offices above. 204 Front Street remains connected with 209 Water Street, providing a long narrow area for the boat workshop.

B. Historical Context:

Front Street was ready for its permanent storehouses when the improvement of the "ten foot cartway" of Front Street between Beekman Slip (Fulton Street) and Crane Wharf (Beekman Street) was accomplished in 1797. The first occupants of 204 Front Street, then called 198 Front Street, were probably Carpenter and Havens, a mercantile firm. Carpenter left in 1803, leaving Havens on his own. By 1804/05, John and Jacob Drake also moved their grocery business into 204 Front Street, remaining until 1810. In 1809, Gabriel Havens joined his brother Philetus in the building. Two years later, the firm of Jenkins and Havens, shipping merchants, appeared at this address. Jenkins left in 1814 and Philetus Havens remained. For the most part, grocery firms inhabited 204 Front Street until the 1882 hotel renovation.

Meanwhile, in 1797, a building stood on the site of 203 Front Street, owned by John Moore and leased by Thomas Howell Smith, a wholesale and retail grocer. According to Scoville, it was in 1803 that the firm of Thomas H. Smith and Son began to be generally known. "From grocers they rose to be the greatest tea importers in the United States." (Scoville, Vol. II, p.51) Peter G. Hart was one of Smith's clerks; he remained at 203 Front (196 Front) in his own successful wholesale grocery business when T. H. Smith left in 1810. In 1815 P.G. Hart bought the storehouse and lot from John Moore and the large difference between 1815 and 1816 tax assessments indicate that 203 Front Street was either virtually rebuilt or a new building replaced the old. The building remained in the Hart family until 1919.

After the 1882 renovation joining the two buildings, 203-204 Front Street served as an unrenowned hotel, probably called Wainwright's under a lease to William Wainwright.

While an 1899 alteration application indicates 203 Front Street housed a restaurant on the ground floor, 204 Front Street was converted into a store and lofts in 1896 when the openings between the buildings were filled in.

Throughout the twentieth century, until the South Street Seaport Museum took a lease from New York City, both buildings contained fish or meat markets. William A. Winant, a wholesale fish merchant, owned and occupied 203 Front Street from 1919 until 1963. Today, 203-204 Front Street connected again, serves as office space for the South Street Seaport Museum. The ground floor of 203 is a gallery of ship models.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Originally designed in the Federal style, these two buildings were connected, utilizing a unified Greek Revival storefront.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The dimensions covering both buildings are approximately 48' (six bays) x 85'. Each building is a rectangle and four stories in height.
2. Foundations: Unknown.
3. Walls: Brick with trabeated granite (post and lintel construction) shopfront.
4. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls spanned with heavy timber joists.
5. Chimneys:

203- Chimney flue in north and south walls.

204- Chimney flue in south wall.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: 203- Bay 1, fixed sash with light; Bay 2, glazed double leaf doors with light; Bay 3, same as #2.  
204- Bay 1, metal double leaf doors with light; Bay 2, wood double leaf doors with light.
- b. Windows and shutters: Second-fourth floor windows- 1/1 sash, double hung, and exterior cast-iron lintels resembling incised stone. 203- Bay 1, Fixed window with light.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Sloped roofs, pitched toward rear wall; asphalt roll-roofing.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Elaborate cast metal cornice covering both buildings. There are acroterion-like cresting elements at either end and in the center. Seven brackets are cast with incised detail, and there are secondary modillions.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: 203- First floor: display room and rear storage; Second floor: offices; Third floor: offices; Fourth floor: loft. 204- First floor: small office and storage, rear wall knocked out to connect with 209 Water St.; Second floor: storage; Third floor: storage; Fourth floor: loft.
2. Stairways:  
  
203- Located along north wall; third and fourth floor stairways have balustrade and newels.  
  
204- Located along south wall, similar to 203- slight differences in construction and in newel and baluster detail.
3. Flooring: Wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish:  
  
Wall- Plaster and beaded wainscot.  
Ceiling- Pressed tin ceilings at first floor. Upper floors composed of board ceilings and exposed joist.
5. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Cast-iron pot belly stove on fourth floor of 203 Front Street.
  - b. Moving fixtures: Hoist in northeast corner of 203 with five foot wood wheel. Freight and passenger elevator in southeast corner of 204.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: 203-204 Front Street is now part of the South Street Seaport Museum, a group of galleries, stores, and piers standing in close proximity to high rise office buildings in lower Manhattan.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early views:

1883 photographs of 205 Front Street show a glimpse of the newly renovated 204 Front Street. From the files of the Museum of the City of New York and also appearing in Rosebrock, Walking Around in South Street, page 50. See bibliographical and supplemental material.



A photograph of two brownstone quoin blocks discovered in excavating the foundation of 203 Front Street. South Street Seaport Reporter: Maritime Library, 205 Front Street.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building and Val Wenzel files, South Street Seaport Museum: Alteration Application #672 (1882) all plans available; #319 and #1326 (1896); 204 Front Street; Compliance #2910 (1889); Alteration #955 (1920) 203 Front Street; #2763 (1919) filed with 207 Water Street; #2050 (1920) 204 Front Street; #3067 (1921) 204 Front Street and 209 Water Street; #1463 (1974) 203 Front Street plans available.

New York City Conveyances, Surrogate's Court.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York 1857-1976, New York Historical Society.

New York City Tax Records, Municipal Archives, 23 Park Row.

New York City Directories, New York Historical Society.

Water Lot Grants Map, Val Wenzel Files, South Street Seaport Museum.

New York City Landmarks Commission: Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge, S.E. Urban Renewal Areas," New York, 1968, pp. 8-9.

South Street Seaport Museum: Rosebrock, Ellen "Historic Structures Report, 203 and 204 Front Street," New York, April 18, 1974.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Rosebrock, Ellen Fletcher. Walking Around in South Street, New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1974, pp. 50-51.

Scoville, Joseph A. alias Barrett, Walter. The Old Merchants of New York. New York: Carleton, Pub., 1862, Vol. II, p. 51.

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM,  
203-204 FRONT STREET  
HABS No. NY-5675 (Page 9)

Prepared by: Lori Zabar  
HABS Project Historian  
Summer 1976

Frederick W. Wiedenmann  
HABS Project Supervisor  
Summer 1976  
(architectural information)

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects- Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.